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STATE FOR G/IWI; EUR/NB - KATHERIN GARRY; EUR/PPD - ANDREA
STRANO

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SUBJECT: ESTONIA: AMBASSADOR VISITS WOMEN'S SHELTER

¶1. (U) On December 10, Ambassador visited the Tallinn Women's Crisis Center (TWCC) to mark International Human Rights Day and the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence. Ambassador toured the facility and met with Center staff, including the center director, a lawyer who provides legal services to domestic violence victims, and a psychologist who specializes in 'crisis psychology.' The discussion focused on both the global scope of gender violence and what is being done in Estonia to address the issue. Ambassador was accompanied by a reporter and photographer from a widely-distributed Tallinn-area free newspaper.

¶2. (U) Estonia has three domestic violence shelters, two of which are in Tallinn. TWCC, which opened in 2006, can house up to 16 women and children at a time (twelve at the main center and four at an offsite apartment). During its first year of operation, the shelter provided a safe place to stay for 62 women and 17 children. In addition, approximately 500 women have utilized the psychological and legal services available at the facility. TWCC also offers off-site psychological counseling services to the partners of abused women.

¶3. (U) Domestic violence is a problem in Estonia, although the level of violence is in line with the EU average. According to domestic NGOs, one in five women in Estonia has suffered physical, emotional, or sexual domestic violence.

¶4. (U) Coverage of Ambassador's visit was provided by Linnaleht (125,000 readers), which published one article specifically about Ambassador's visit and a second article about gender violence in Estonia in general. The Embassy asked Linnaleht to accompany Ambassador in order to garner much-needed publicity for the shelter. Linnaleht is distributed for free throughout the Tallinn area, thus offering the best potential to get information about the center's resources to the women and families in need.

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